

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: July 1, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS KENNY
 TESSIER
 MERLINO
 BENTLEY
 CHAMPAGNE
 SIMMES

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR GOODSPEED

OTHERS PRESENT:

FRANCIS O' KEEFE, COUNTY TREASURER
MICHAEL CONSUELO, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL
 SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISOR PITKIN
SUPERVISOR TAYLOR
SUPERVISOR STRAINER
FRED AUSTIN, BUILDING PROJECTS COORDINATOR
LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF
 CHAMBERS
TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 10:45 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier, seconded by Mrs. Simmes and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Francis O' Keefe, Warren County Treasurer, who presented the Treasurer's Report on Occupancy Tax Revenues. He reported that \$545,629.77 had been collected for the period from March through May 2009, which was approximately 20% below the figure reported at this time last year. He stated that many businesses had closed due to the economy.

Mr. Kenny stated that the decline in Occupancy Tax Revenue in Warren County was consistent with the data reflected in the Smith Travel Reports, and he acknowledged that vacation plans were often weather dependent and vacationers made last minute plans utilizing the website.

Mr. Kenny introduced Michael Consuelo, the new Special Events Coordinator, whose main contact person in the Warren County Tourism Department was Tanya Brand, Group Tour

Promoter, who was also present today.

Mr. Consuelo stated that he had been in the position of Hospitality, Special Events & Convention Sales Director for two weeks and referenced the Lake George Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. (LGRCVB) report which was distributed to the Committee members. He stated his objectives to promote the Lake George region as a destination for future groups, conventions and event planners, ultimately bringing conventions and larger groups to the area. He noted that his industry experience and previously established contacts would prove helpful to his efforts in the new position. Partnering with Warren County, he said, was critical in identifying and promoting the many venues available to be accomplished through phone calls, trade shows, direct mail, and other strategies.

Mr. Consuelo apprised that he and Ms. Brand attended the Empire State Society of Association Executives (ESSAE) Trade Show last week. He said it was an opportunity to introduce the Lake George region as a destination to decision makers in the Travel and Tourism industry. He added that recently and after much effort, association planners had been convinced that Saratoga was a destination of choice and this development included the Lake George region. Further, he noted, markets that were formerly taken for granted such as religious, military, social and fraternal markets, would be addressed as viable opportunities.

Mr. Consuelo noted Mr. Taylor's suggestion to bring fishing tournaments to the area and he pointed out that with a serious effort put forth, there were many ways to promote the local venues. Concluding, Mr. Consuelo asserted that he planned to commence the marketing efforts with aggressive sales strategies which also included collaboration with the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Warren County Tourism Department. He stated that he welcomed questions from the Committee.

Mr. Champagne asked if he had a list of potential leads and Mr. Consuelo replied affirmatively. Mr. Kenny stated that this private/public venture was new for the County and he said it behooved the County to share leads with Mr. Consuel and he urged Mr. Consuelo to attend the monthly Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee meetings.

According to Mr. Consuelo, his goal for next month was to meet with each Supervisor in order to familiarize himself with each respective area within the County.

Mr. Bentley noted a fishing tournament was held on the waters of Lake George last week. Mr. Kenny apprised that Lake Champlain offered a number of fishing events also. Chairman Monroe suggested the potential success of a bass fishing event in the area and Mr. Kenny recommended a fall target date for same. According to Mr. Consuelo, the paradigm of thought had shifted to include outdoor activities as discussed.

Chairman Monroe suggested that a boat race be considered for Lake George. Mr. Merlino asked if Mr. Consuelo had planned to meet with *The Post Star*, in order to ensure positive coverage of County initiatives.

Mr. Kenny thanked Mr. Conseuelo for the presentation. Resuming the agenda review, Mr. Kenny presented an application for Contract Funding from the Town of Hague, for a one day Octoberfest, to be held on September 26, 2009 in the Hague Town Park, requesting funding in the amount of \$5,000.

Mr. Kenny apprised that one day events were not typically approved and he noted the estimated bed nights to be very low at 150, and therefore, recommended denial of the request. Responding to a question from Mr. Merlino, Mr. Kenny reported an account balance of \$8,900 in the Special Events Fund. Furthermore, Mr. Kenny apprised that Tourism funding was based on Occupancy Tax Revenues and if occupancy tax collection continued to fall, the Tourism budget would decline resulting in a reduced special events budget for next year. Mr. Kenny acknowledged the positive nature of the requested event; however, he said, it would not be fiscally effective.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mrs. Simmes and carried unanimously to deny the application for contract funding as presented. *A copy of the Application for Contract Funding is on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was extended to Luisa Craige-Sherman, Warren County Council of Chambers, who stated that the Committee had supported the hospitality seminar held on June 23rd which was funded by Occupancy Tax revenues. She reported that 34 individuals attended the seminar and a Professor from the Tourism & Hospitality Program of the State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh was the guest speaker. She said that the speaker was well received and she was waiting for official feedback results. Ms. Craige-Sherman reported that the Council of Chambers had distributed the annual roster of meetings, which were held in different towns on a monthly basis. Relative to Occupancy Tax, she said, a second letter supporting the enhanced broadband initiative had been sent at the request of Supervisor Thomas and supported by the Board of Directors, with the understanding that lodging facilities relied on the broadband capability in order to succeed. She added that broadband capability would allow hotels to obtain higher occupancy rates which would generate income for Warren County. Ms. Craige-Sherman stated that the next Council event, the annual outing, would be held in September and the details would follow.

Mr. Merlino requested a written copy of the Treasurer's Report presented today and Mr. Kenny stated that he would ensure that copies of the report were distributed to Committee members. Mr. Geraghty reported that plans were underway to redevelop Hickory Hill in Warrensburg as a year round venue. He said that snow making and a new ski lift would be added, and that snowboarding and mountain bicycling would be offered.

As there was no further business to come before the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mr. Merlino and seconded by Mr. Bentley, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist